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U. S. Tightening Rules On Health-Grant Funds

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Tighter rules will be imposed shortly on Government grants to thousands of medical researchers in laboratories across the country.

The Public Health Service, revising management of its ballooning \$1.2 billion grant program, will require closer accounting on salaries, equipment purchases, trips and time actually devoted by a researcher to a given project.

The new regulations stem from a combination of factors, including:

1. The startling growth of Federal health grants in the past 10 years, spurring from \$144 million in 1953 to \$1.2 billion in the 1963 budget.

2. Awareness by the National Institutes of Health of the need to develop uniform policies applicable to all nine of its institutes investigating such major diseases as cancer, heart ailments, arthritis, etc.

Fear Red Tape

3. Criticism by Congress and the General Accounting Office of the administration of the thousands of grants issued each year.

Some scientists are known to

be unhappy about the rule changes. They fear encroachment on their traditional "freedom of scientific investigation" and are worried about becoming ensnarled in more red tape.

The issue revolves, in a way, around the philosophy of a research grant. Awarding Federal or private dollars to a scientist normally involves a trust between the two, say NIH officers. NIH does not expect fly-by-night applicants, nor does it approve them if they do apply.

Consequently, an atmosphere has developed around research grants in which the donor, trusting the recipient's intent, asks no more questions than necessary. After fully stating his research plans and winning approval, the grantee is naturally expected to fulfill his end of the bargain.

New Manual Set

Up to now, all the recipient had to do was to file a yearly progress report on his activities. This relatively easy-going procedure is being replaced with a businesslike new "Grants Manual" requiring:

A scientist to inform the

awarding health institute of any "significant deviation" from the original grant (a switch from heart to cancer research, for example).

Scientists to give a quarterly after-the-fact accounting of time and effort on which salaries can be figured.

Washington approval of equipment costing over \$1,000.

Approval of the institution or university housing the scientist for domestic travel and Washington approval of overseas trips.

A scientist who runs afoul of the rules probably will have a difficult time getting his grant renewed. In such an event, he might "lose face" in the scientific community for a reason quite apart from his skill as a scientist—a hazard that researchers must reckon with when they apply for a grant.